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The Quest for good food is over

The new food that is taking over New Trier

by Anna Ferguson

Longer lines, higher prices, and a whole new menu have created some very strong opinions on New Trier's new food provider, Quest.

One outstanding factor motivated the decision to switch providers. This was a routine process of bidding for other food providers that ensures that the school is getting the best quality service for the best price, according to the administration.

Denise Dubravec, principal of the Winnetka campus, elaborated on the decision, "I think it's just good practice to make sure that you're always looking for a provider that gives you the best service."

A survey of the student's opinions on the food and how the cafeteria was run indicated that it was time for a change, so the school began the lengthy process of searching for a new food provider during the middle of the last school year.

The process of choosing a new food provider was a rigorous one, according to Dubravec. The school assembled a committee of students, teachers, and administrators to review various food providers' applications,



While the new food has left a good impression on students, the slow service and long lines have not | Scherman

watch their presentations, and go to other schools to see the food providers in action.

After the meticulous selection process, with Aramark, Chartwells, and Quest comprising the top three food provider candidates, Quest came out on top. "We were looking for healthy food and then cost, along with dietary needs. We also wanted a

food provider with the ability to serve the population of kids that we have in a timely manner," said Dubravec.

Quest seems to be as well liked by the students as by the selection committee: "It's so dece[nt]," said senior George Owen, "The food this year is low key— so much better than last year."

However, slow service and

higher pricing have become a major inconvenience for some students and have left them less than satisfied, "I love the food, but I hate waiting in the huge lines," said senior Brendan Loftus.

Dubravec insists that these are only temporary problems, "We've addressed the slow service with Quest... and one of the items that

they need to address is adding more staffing, and they're in the process of doing that," she said.

Food plays a huge role in student life, according to a recent Yale study. Food influences memory, attention, and behavior which can have huge effects on relationships with teachers and other students. Therefore, giving students access to healthy food that they enjoy eating has a positive effect on students happiness and performance.

It is important that the food served in the cafeteria be of high quality and that it be served as quickly as possible, without draining New Trier students' IDs.

Regardless of the minor inconveniences of the new food provider, students seem to agree that Quest is a step up from Aramark. "I always used to bring my lunch," said senior Jackson Hurst, "but I really like the school food this year and I've started buying my lunch every day."

Despite the service issues that students have experienced through these first couple of weeks with Quest, Dubravec remains positive about New Trier's new food provider,

"We're one of the largest schools in this area, so it's not an easy task. So there are always going to be hiccups, but the most important thing is that they want to do the best they can to serve our school."

Construction progresses smoothly, despite minor detours

The construction continues on schedule, but hall closures have some students frustrated

by Sarah Zhang

The renovation of the East campus, which began last spring, has made much progress during the summer and is on schedule to be completed in the 2017-2018 school year.

This past summer, construction crews have been at the school daily, tearing down and rebuilding as much as they could before students came in for the new school year.

Niki Dizon, Director of Communications, explained that the summer is when the bulk of the work has to be done. "With construction on a large project like this, the summer is when we have to get our dirtiest, noisiest work out of the way. This summer it was demolition and excavation."

Dizon, who handles communication with neighbors and community members, said there was great excitement and support for the project over the summer, even with the dust, dirt, and noise: "People are very enthusiastic to actually see the project taking place; they can actually visualize it now."

Pat Sumrow, the district project facilitator and consultant, said the



Construction crews continue to make progress on the renovation as students and teachers return | Lutschaunig

response has been positive from teachers and project workers as well: "Hundreds of hours of input have been gathered from the teachers and building leaders who are extremely excited about the new addition to New Trier."

Although there is much support for the project among the community now, as many remember, a different project was originally proposed in 2010, but failed to pass. As senior Sarah Arment recalls, "I remember hearing about the referendum before and I was excited about it, but it just seemed too expensive."

Much has changed between then and now, however. The original

referendum was \$174 million, a price voters felt was too high to agree to, according to Dizon.

"We went back and we really listened to the community, and surveyed them. We put forth a new plan that we really thought the community could get behind," said Dizon. The budget for the 2014 referendum proposal was just over half the 2010 cost, at \$89 million, while the current project budget remains a little over \$100 million.

With the support of the New Trier community, construction began last spring.

"At the end of last year, there was very minimal work done on

the building," Dizon said. The largest portion done was to begin preparations to tear down the Tech-Arts Building, which moved many students and staff into trailers.

This summer, the actual demolition began immediately after school ended, with crews moving in to excavate the area to make way for a new basement. Compared to what's on track for the next year, the T-Wing's destruction is just the tip of the iceberg.

"In the fall, we'll see some steel go up, and the goal is that by winter break, we'll have what they call the envelope [the outside of the building] all boxed in," said Dizon. "On the

East side of the campus, we've expanded Essex Road. Now, there are actually two lanes, a drop-off lane and a through lane."

Along with a new art building and the extra lanes, construction is also being done on the cafeteria, library, and many classrooms, including outdated science labs.

With construction and interior reconstruction continuing into the school year, there are ample student concerns.

For senior Soofia Nikamal, the concern is specifically about noise and getting around the school without the same ease as before construction began.

"A lot of hallways are blocked off, and the crews are working during the school day. I hope that I can go about my day as normally as before," said Nikamal.

Sumrow spoke to these concerns, saying "Based upon my experience with other major high school construction projects, the construction project will proceed at a rapid pace as school is in session. Generally, both functions can coexist well."

Dizon added "For students, faculty and staff, we need to talk about things like hallways--you might have to go a different route to classes this year, and we're going to do our best to monitor any noise generated from the construction, said Dizon. "We want to make sure that students have the same, great experience that they've always had at New Trier."